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Photos show evidence of 2 weap[illegible]ons, expert says

JFK slaying rifle switched, test hints

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By SETH KANTOR
News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A recently declassified CIA memo, written six days after President John F. Kennedy was slain, Nov. 22, 1963, shows the CIA then privately suspected that more than one rifle may be involved.

The rifle was being depicted as the murder weapon said to have been used by the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

These CIA suspicions are supported by new findings of a Texas graphics expert who says he has developed photographic evidence showing the alleged murder weapon in possession of the National Archives in Washington is not the same as the rifle which the Dallas police department purported to be the murder weapon.

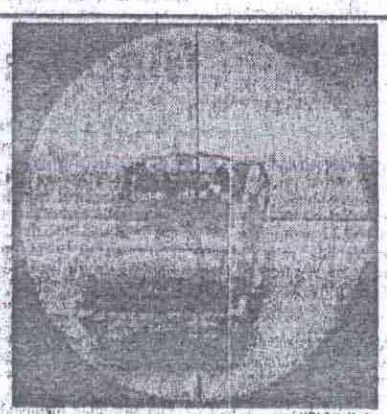
While not conclusive at this point, these findings appear to raise serious questions about the Warren Commission report regarding one slug believed fired from the Oswald weapon and fingerprints reportedly lifted from it, including the possibility — as some critics believe — that some evidence may have been falsified deliberately.

Jack White of Fort Worth, the graphics expert, has met behind closed doors on Capitol Hill with Sen. Richard S. Schweiker, R-Pa., who has been co-chairman of a special Senate subcommittee probe of the Kennedy assassination since last fall.

Schweiker has said privately he is "extremely interested" in White's multiple-gun evidence and wants Senate investigators to conduct a more extensive probe of White's findings.

Artwork illustrates graphics expert's findings that photos of the alleged Oswald weapon in the National Archives and the rifle Dallas police said was used to kill President Kennedy differ. Although photos of both weapons matched up front, the expert said the Archives rifle had a longer stock which also was shaped differently.

Last Thursday, members of the Senate Intelligence Committee voted to open a congressional probe into unanswered questions of President Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Reporter Seth Kantor, as a member of Scripps-Howard Newspapers' Washington Bureau in 1963, accompanied Kennedy to Dallas on the fateful trip. He was the only Washington reporter summoned to testify before the Warren Commission and has been examining events surrounding the murder ever since. Kantor has been with The Detroit News four years.



Sniper's view

This photo, taken through rifle scope, was part of the Warren Commission report. It was taken during a reenactment of President Kennedy's assassination at the time of the commission's investigation.

At the same time, former Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry, in charge of Oswald's arrest and identification as the President's murderer, told The Sunday News that "it's more than possible" the gun allegedly used by Oswald could have been substituted by another during the wild weekend in which Oswald was both questioned in connection with Kennedy's murder and then shot dead in Curry's police station by Jack Ruby.

Curry said last week that anyone able to substitute one suspected murder weapon for another "could have gotten away with it at the time" because no special precautions were taken to isolate the weapon as historic evidence.

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Still unresolved are conflicting reports over what kind of weapon that was.

The rifle found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building — pinpointed by authorities as Oswald's sniper nest — was inspected on the spot and described by a deputy constable familiar with foreign guns as a 7.65 German Mauser.

Later, the murder weapon was identified by Dallas police as a 6.5-cal. Mannlicher-Carcano — an obsolete Italian army carbine, which had been clearly stamped "Made in Italy" for sale through American arms outlets.

But then the CIA disputed that identification in an internal report which said two different kinds of Italian-made carbines were being depicted as the single murder weapon.

That report was not made part of Warren Commission documents and there is no indication the Warren Commission ever saw the report.

According to the report kept secret nearly 13 years and declassified only recently, the CIA had internal doubts that the purported murder weapon being shown in pictures after Mr. Kennedy's death was the 6.5 caliber rifle it was supposed to be.

Instead, the intelligence agency said in a 39-point analysis transmitted from Italy to U.S. CIA headquarters on Nov. 28, 1963, the weapon "which appears to have been employed in this criminal attack is a model 91 rifle, 7.35-cal., 1938 modification."

The CIA report especially questioned whether an assassin would select an obsolete 6.5 Mannlicher-Carcano as a tool for a sniper determined to shoot the president as a moving target, at long range.

The first batch of 7,500 Mannlicher-Carcanos imported into the United States for sale on the open market to hunters and gun collectors "had disastrous results," the CIA said. "Many of them burst, with frequent fatal consequences, and many didn't fire."

Many 6.5-caliber models were exported from Italian military stockpiles to a U.S. arms dealer for as little as $1.10 apiece, the CIA said. The agency said the more sturdy, more reliable 7.35-caliber sniper models wholesaled for up to $4.50 apiece.

But the Warren Commission concluded in 1964 that the 6.5 Mannlicher-Carcano in custody at the National Archives was the murder weapon.

Now, however, researcher Jack White, working independently in Texas, has developed evidence which would show the weapon in the National Archives is not the same as the one displayed as Oswald's rifle in the Dallas police station on the day of the murder.

White is vice-president and art director of a large Fort Worth advertising firm. He became interested in aspects of the Kennedy assassination several years ago and began to study, strictly as a hobby, the minute details of film records of the assassination-related events.

Several months ago White discovered what he believed to be major discrepancies in comparative details of the weapon as it was photographed in Dallas and Washington after the assassination.

Working with such customary investigative photo techniques as grid measurements and overlays, White discovered "irreconcilable differences" when he matched up photos of what was supposed to be the same weapon.

He discovered distinct differences in both the length and configuration of the rifle stock in comparable profile studio pictures taken of the weapon, first at the Dallas police station and then in Washington for the Warren Commission Report.

The Warren Report said the murder rifle was 40.2 inches long. But White found — when he matched the pictures to scale, so that the metal components from muzzle to trigger were lined up — the wooden stock of the "Dallas gun" was significantly shorter and slightly different in shape than the "Washington gun."

White's findings raise two major questions:

First, why would two versions of one standard military weapon have two different stocks?

Schweiker was told by an arms expert that Italian soldiers commonly altered the sizes of their wooden Mannlicher-Carcano stocks to fit their own needs.

But secondly, and more important, why would there be a need for anyone to substitute one rifle for another in the bizarre Kennedy murder case?

Warren Commission critics come up with two basic reasons.

First, there is the so-called "magic bullet" issue. The "magic bullet" is the irreverent name the critics have given to the unbattered bullet found on a stretcher at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas after Mr. Kennedy and Texas Gov. John B. Connally were shot and rushed to that hospital.

The Warren Commission concluded that the bullet — which was fired from the same 6.5-caliber Mannlicher-Carcano now in the National Archives, according to ballistic test — had passed through both the President and Connally.

Some critics suspect the "magic bullet" was planted on the stretcher. They have long claimed the bullet was "test-fired" from the weapon that was sent to Washington.

Secondly, the weapon is supposed to have made two separate trips to Washington from Dallas. The first time, no identifiable fingerprints were found on it. The second time, a clear Oswald palmprint was established.

At 11:45 p.m. Nov. 22, 1963, the day of the murder, FBI agent Vincent E. Drain flew the suspected murder weapon from Dallas police headquarters to the FBI crime laboratory in Washington.

Dallas Police Lt. J.C. Day, the force's fingerprint expert, carefully covered some partial and smudged prints on the gun with protective cellophane, before releasing the weapon to agent Drain.

The next day, Nov. 23, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote to Dallas Police Chief Curry that no useful prints had been found on the weapon in the Washington FBI lab.

Hoover's letter, which said no identifiable Oswald print had been found, did not appear in the Warren Report.

Drain returned to Dallas with the weapon on Nov. 24, the day Oswald was slain by Ruby in the police station basement.

Two days later the weapon again was flown to Washington, to remain.

But on Nov. 29, a palmprint on the gun's barrel was received by the Washington from Lt. Day. Day had lifted the print on the evening of 22, but had not told the FBI.

Day said he had told Chief Curry the palmprint, concealed by the stock, but had not taken a picture as he had with the smudged prints.

Some critics believe Oswald's print could have been placed on the after his murder Nov. 24.

Curry said last week that he anyone would have switched rifles Dallas or Washington.

"The only reason I know of for s to substitute guns," he said, "would obtain the original for a souvenir."